

To the Mental Health Task Force:

Note: This testimony was also submitted to the Gun Violence task force - as this testimony also focuses on mental health issues, I submit this for your task force review.

The tragedy that took place in Newtown CT has affected us all - and we continue to mourn for those who have lost a loved one and to have compassion for the responders who had to witness such a horrific crime scene.

Since that tragedy, it seems as though there has been an emotional gun control response by some at state and federal levels (CT Proposed Bill #122 - a one round magazine). All legislation needs to be approached with rational and responsible discussion and actions. The idea of this task force is a rational response from which I hope we can expect rational and responsible outcomes.

Connecticut has solid gun control measures in place and is one of the tougher states to get a permit and buy a gun. We do not need more gun laws and regulations to feel like we are "doing something" - these are statistically proven not effective. Faulty gun legislation would only further restrict the law abiding gun owner who has followed the proper channels and have a negative impact on their right to own and carry a gun. The huge increase in NRA membership since the tragedy is a testament to the big concern people have over their rights - legislators should take note.

The only suggestion I think is prudent for additional gun measures is to have a background/gun permit check for private/gun show sales. This is already standard procedure at all gun stores.

The focus should be on "all violence control" not just on "gun violence control". Behind all these tragedies has been a mentally unstable person. Mental health is the issue that needs to be addressed. How much violence is seen and heard in everyday life (tv shows, video games, movies, song lyrics) has a negative effect on mental health. It is proven that a child that grows up with violence in their every day life will tend to be more violent as an adult. More regulation here could make a difference so focus should be placed on this for review and consideration.

My other suggestions:

Parental involvement/oversight/monitoring - parents need to be aware and be able to report to someone (school psychologist, doctor, hotline) concerns they have with their child's behavior (obsessive gaming, etc..)

School involvement/oversight/monitoring - school psychologist, teachers, counselors, team coaches, classmates - all should be trained to know what to look for as a warning sign and have an outlet to report (classmates should have an anonymous way to report)

Health class - mental health (and warning signs) should be a very important topic and integral part of the curriculum in all health class in school taught at appropriate grade levels

Mental health hotline (help) awareness - posted in schools, billboards, internet (facebook), tv ads, etc.- maybe something printed on those violent games and movies (similar to drug adverse reactions that have to be mentioned on the tv ads and on package inserts)

Mental health stigma - a "coming out" of some famous actors/athletes of mental health issues they have overcome and how they got help might have a positive influence to show it is ok to seek help as others have done

I feel the focus on gun control legislation has caused a bigger division in our country.

We need to stand unified to address and solve the real issues here which will benefit our future generations.

Regards,

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